

POLLUTION PREVENTION
ALTERNATIVES TO HAZARDOUS SOLVENTS



Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Solvent and Cleaner Disposal

Publication Number 96-422

Revised November 2000

Question #1

A supplier says he has a cleaner that is completely biodegradable. Does this mean I can dispose of it down the drain?

Answer

Biodegradable does not mean the same thing as non-hazardous. Even if it is biodegradable, testing may still show it to be a dangerous waste, either because of its ingredients or contaminants picked up from the parts being cleaned. Dangerous waste can be sewered under certain conditions, but state regulations require a special permit to do so.

Discarded cleaner may adversely affect the oil/water separator that may be attached to your drain. Cleaners that form emulsions, as many aqueous cleaners do, or that are heated, can render your oil/water separator ineffective. This could lead to sewer or water quality violations.

Even though a cleaner may be biodegradable, your sewer authority may have a number of other restrictions that may apply, including pH, BOD, oils, and temperature. Nothing except clean storm water should ever be discharged to a storm drain. Wash water should not be discharged through storm drains or drywells, or to ditches or streams. If you are unsure where a drain discharges, call your local sewer authority, public works department, or health department. For more information, see Ecology Publication #F-SWS-94-117.

Question #2

I have a cleaner with a label saying it does not contain hazardous ingredients. Can I dispose of it to my septic tank?

Answer

No, if your drains lead to a septic tank, nothing should be put down the drain except sanitary wastes from restrooms. Septic tank disposal of industrial cleaner maybe illegal in your area, and may harm your septic system. Check with your local health department for more information.

Question #3
Q ***We use a solvent substitute that does not designate as dangerous waste when it's spent. Can we add it to used oil to be burned in a space heater or recycled?***

Answer

If solvents that would not designate for any reason before and after use become contaminated with used oil during use, that wastestream may be managed under the used oil regulations. The Department of Ecology does not allow the intentional mixing of anything with your used oil. Adding any wastes to used oil will cause it to lose its dangerous waste exemption.

Question #4
Q ***What do we do with absorbents or shop towels used to pick up drips and spills of solvent?***

Answer

If used to pick up a listed solvent waste, then the absorbent takes on that listing as a dangerous waste, otherwise used absorbents are not normally a dangerous waste, and may be eligible for disposal in your local landfill. Call your local landfill for restrictions on the amount of free liquids that are allowed, and other requirements.

Shop towels used to mop spills and drips, or to hand wipe solvents, are allowed to be sent to a commercial laundry with an adequate sewer permit, and that contain no excess solvent (are wrung out, if necessary). All solvent-laden towels should be stored in labeled, closed containers.

Question #5: Can I use my non-hazardous solvent substitute to wash down our floors?
Q

Answer

If the wash residue enters a sanitary drain, there are restrictions, and the situation is the same as addressed in questions #1 and #2 above.

Question #6
Q ***Can filter cartridges from a filtering parts washer be disposed of in the dumpster?***

Answer

It depends whether the solvent or the contaminants captured by the filter would cause it to fail testing for a dangerous waste. If you wish to avoid the expense of testing, handle and manage the filters as you would a dangerous waste.

Question #7
I've looked into alternatives, and some of them seem to produce more waste than the hazardous solvent I currently use. Wouldn't it be better to stick with my current solvent?

Answer

Alternative cleaners, especially those that require rinsing, may produce a greater volume of waste, but this waste may be less toxic and hazardous, or readily treatable by your local sewage treatment plant (see Question # 1).

If you have both acid and caustic waste streams that do not contain other hazardous ingredients or contaminants, you may be able to neutralize them by mixing them together (for more information and precautions see your local sewer authority and Ecology Publication #F-HWTR-93-130). Be aware that combining strong acids and caustics may be dangerous. If you have acid and caustic rinse baths, you might be able to follow an acidic rinse with left-over caustic rinse, and *vice versa*. Other methods to reduce rinsing waste include:

- ✓ Use countercurrent rinsing.
- ✓ Use spent rinse as bath make-up.
- ✓ Use a cleaner rinse as make up for a dirtier one.
- ✓ Reduce drag-out by orienting parts correctly in the bath, installing drain boards that return drips to baths, using "air knives," or giving parts more time to drain.
- ✓ Use rinsing sprays or fog nozzles over baths, thereby providing makeup water for evaporation (especially from heated tanks).

Question #8
I'd like to get some help with understanding the hazardous waste regulations, but I don't want an Ecology inspector to come to my shop. What can I do?

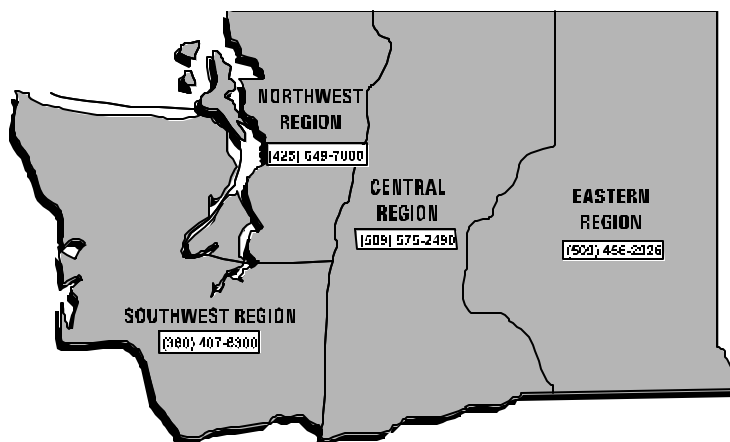
Answer

You can call one of the Ecology offices listed below to obtain free advice over the phone. You do not have to identify yourself when you call. You can also have Ecology send you helpful guides to understanding the regulations.

For More Information

Ecology has experienced Pollution Prevention Consultants available to advise you on solvent substitution techniques and issues. They can provide information over the telephone, or make educational (non-enforcement) visits to your work site to provide free technical assistance on solvent substitution, economic considerations, pollution prevention opportunities, and suppliers. Use the regional phone numbers below to ask for a Toxics Reduction Specialist.

Northwest Region	(425) 649-7000	Central Region	(509) 456-2926
Southwest Region	(360) 407-6300	Eastern Region	(509) 575-2490



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If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in alternative format, please contact the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at (360) 407-6700 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).

Ecology's telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) number is (360) 407-6006. Regional TDD numbers are:

*CRO (TDD) (509) 454-7673
ERO (TDD) (509) 458-2055*

*NWRO (TDD) (425) 649-4259
SWRO (TDD) (360) 407-6306*



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